DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 430 946 SP 038 530

AUTHOR Makkawi, Ibrahim
TITLE Ethnic Identity Development and In-service Teacher Education: A Case Study in Resistance and Change.
PUB DATE 1999-04-23
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Montreal, Quebec, Canada, April 19-23, 1999).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitude Change; *Consciousness Raising; Cultural Awareness; *Ethnicity; Faculty Development; Females; Higher Education; *Inservice Teacher Education; Multicultural Education; *Racial Identification; *Resistance to Change; Teacher Improvement; Whites
IDENTIFIERS *Identity Formation

ABSTRACT

This case study examined ethnic identity development within inservice teacher education. Participants were 11 white, female teachers in a summer course on multicultural education. Course readings were selected and sequenced to represent the experiences of ethnic and racial groups in American society while emphasizing intergroup power relations. The underlying assumption was that people respond to such information from their own white identity status, and through a cooperative learning process, they can move into higher statuses of healthy, nonracist white racial identity. The course drew upon psychology, sociology, and anthropology while emphasizing the dynamics between education, culture, and socioeconomic status and group and individual responses to these structures. The course stressed the dynamics of power and oppression in institutional settings, encouraging students to respond from their own collective identity. A student-centered, cooperative-learning approach based on critical reading, thinking, interpreting, and socially constructing knowledge was used. Students read assigned materials, wrote critical reflections, and participated in discussions. Data from participant observation and students' written reflections highlighted four subgroups: the hard to reach, the resisters to change, the searchers, and those who had achieved identity. The conceptualization of nonracist white racial identity as a positive development put many participants at ease and helped them further explore their own identity. Cooperative learning created a context in which individuals felt safe to voice and explore their opinions regarding controversial issues. (Contains 14 references.) (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

SP

Ethnic Identity Development And In-service Teacher Education: A Case Study in Resistance and Change

Paper presented at the AERA Annual Meeting
April 19-23, 1999 -- Montreal, Canada

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

I. Makkawi

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Ibrahim Makkawi
E-mail: imakkawi@kent.edu
Educational Psychology
Kent State University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

1

ED 430 946

Theoretical Background

In their book, *The social self*, Babad, Birnbaum & Benne (1983) make a clear distinction between heterogeneity and pluralism in society. While heterogeneous societies include different racial and ethnic groups that may or may not be equal, pluralism is viewed as "an ideal state of society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain their autonomous ways yet share equitable participation in power and in access to society's resources" (p. 19). According to the "melting pot" model, the ironic goal of eliminating inter-group differences is usually understood as ethnic minority groups are acculturated into the mainstream and majority culture (Splinder & Splinder, 1990). This process is rejected in favor of the "vegetable soup" model in which "groups should remain different and distinct from each other, while equal opportunity and equality before the law are preserved" (Babad et al., 1983, p. 28).

There are at least three general reasons for the growing interests in research on ethnic identity development in particular among minority groups in the Unites States. First, a growing number of people do not want to assimilate in the "melting pot" and would rather maintain their unique ethnic identity. Second, from an educational perspective, students' ethnic identity must be recognized and celebrated in order to create equal opportunities for achievement and success. Third, there is the assumption that the more people are confident and secure about their own ethnic identity the less they become prejudiced against people from other ethnic groups (Aboud & Doyle, 1993).

According to social identity theory, social identity is defined as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [or her] knowledge of his [or her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1981 p. 255). One of the main assumptions that provide some theoretical depth to our discussion of ethnic identity in pluralistic society is based on, Tajfel's statement that "any society which contains power, status, prestige and social group differentials (and they all do), places each of us in a number of social categories which become an integral part of our self-definition" (1977, p. 66).

There is a wide range models of ethnic-racial identity development which are grounded in the social identity paradigm. Some of these models which were explored in the current case study include Cross' (1971, 1991) African American racial identity development, Helms' (1984) White racial identity development and Phinney's (1989) ethnic identity development among minority youth. Since the whole group of participants in this case study was composed of White female students, Helms' model of White racial identity development will provide a more specific framework for the analysis.

Helms' model of White racial identity development (1995, 1997) draws upon J. M. Jones (1981) distinction between three types of racism: (a) individual racism is defined as a set of personal attitudes, perceptions and beliefs regarding White

SP038530

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

superiority over non-White racial groups; (b) institutional racism refers to social policies and regulations whose main goal is to maintain political and economical advantages of Whites over non-white racial groups; and (c) cultural racism is a social belief that White culture and its products are superior to other cultures. White racial identity is defined as "a psychological orientation towards their racial group membership. From that orientation grows one's view of other racial groups" (Carter, 1997 p. 199). Helms (1997) views the development of healthy White racial identity as a process by which White individuals overcome one or more of the above mentioned types of racism. Furthermore, the individual "must accept his or her own Whiteness, the cultural implications of being White, and define a view of Self as a racial being that does not depend on the superiority of one racial group over another" (p. 207). Explicit in this definition is the assumption that White individuals are unaware of themselves as Whites and do not consider race as a defining factor of their identity.

Helms (1984) initially developed a six stage model of White racial identity development which indicates a linear progression from less developed to more developed stages. She has recently modified her model and replaced the term *stages* with *statuses* which she defined as "the dynamic cognitive, emotional, and behavioral process that governs a person's interpretation of racial information in her or his interpersonal environment" (1995, p. 184). Following is a brief summary of the six statuses:

Contact is the status in which the person is not aware of him or herself as a racial being and is satisfied with the racial status quo. *Disintegration* is the status in which the individual realizes that race does matter and that racism does exist which leads to a form of disorientation and anxiety. *Reintegration* is viewing White culture as superior and idealizing ones racial group in comparison to others. *Pseudo-Independence* is the first step in redefining White identity in which assumptions which suggest that people of color are innately inferior or deprived are being questioned. *Immersion-Emersion* indicates the beginning of being aware of the existence of racism and starting to challenge its implication. People in this status begin seeking more accurate information about their own and other racial groups. *Autonomy* is the ultimate outcome of the racial identity process in which the person has freed him or herself from racism and White racial denial (Helms, 1995, 1997; Carter, 1997).

The Case Study

This case study is based on a five week summer course entitled Professional Practices in Multicultural Society offered to group of eleven participants, all white females which included eight in-service teachers, one students affairs professional, one nurse and one full time graduate student in counseling. The broader theoretical framework of the course is rooted in the social identity paradigm (Tajfel, 1981). More specifically, the readings were selected and sequenced in a way that represents the experiences of various ethnic and racial groups in American society while emphasizing inter-group power relations. These readings were treated as "racial material" (Helms, 1995) to which the participants were instructed to respond both in writing and in group discussion. The underlying assumption is that people respond to this information from their own White racial identity status, and through a cooperative learning process (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1991) they are able to move into higher statuses of healthy non-racist White racial identity.

Course Description

As indicated in the course description, reflections on cultural pluralistic democracy in a global society included the following topics: major theoretical perspectives on dynamics of inter-group relations, cultural and social-psychological models of collective identity development, political-ideological, cognitive and affective, multicultural interactions and issues of human diversity in professional practices.

This course utilized a multidisciplinary approach drawing upon disciplines such as Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology while focusing on the dynamics between education, culture and socio-economic structure and group and

individual responses to these structures. The dynamics of power and oppression (e.g. racism, sexism) in institutional setting where learning takes place were stressed and students were instructed and encouraged to respond to such issues from the position of their own collective identity. The course focused on the "common threads" that explain social dynamics associated with race and ethnicity, social class, gender and exceptionally. The course aimed to promote shared conceptual understanding in a cooperative community of learners (the students) based on shared knowledge base. Given that the topic could be developed from many perspectives, and that the students came from different perspectives and program areas, a portion of the course content was co-constructed.

Instructional Approach

The instructional style used in this course was student-centered, cooperative learning, dialogic, and based on critical reading, thinking, interpreting and socially constructing knowledge. The class meetings were conducted in a seminar style, consisting primarily of discussions of the readings and illustrative case studies, mini-lectures by the instructor, small groups and whole class discussions. Each student was asked to contribute "cases" from her life experience that illustrate the various issues and dynamics under study.

Students read the assigned material in advance and wrote critical reflections-reconstructions in terms of their own lived experiences. These reflections were first shared and discussed in small cooperative learning groups, and then engaged in a whole class discussion facilitated by instructor. The students received written feedback on their reflection from the instructor focusing on the process of change and development and were encouraged to revise and update them on light of the new information. Revised papers were finally handed in for grading in the last day of the semester.

Data Sources

Data for this case study is based on two sources: (a) participant observation and close interaction with the course participant for five weeks; (b) written reflections to the readings both in progress drafts and revised papers were collected and analyzed for content.

Findings

The classification of the participants' based on their reactions throughout the course followed Helms' (1997) warning of the tendency among stage theorists to classify people in one stage or another, which results in a static condition, and her re-conceptualization of racial identity development in terms of ego statuses from which individuals respond to "racial information" in their environment. From observation and interaction with the students and analysis of their reflections to the reading it is possible however, to identify four subgroups.

The Hard to Reach: The first group includes two special education teachers who were in their early fifties. They had very little to say and were hard to engage on a personal level. I labeled this group hard to reach to indicate their low level of participation and challenging existing attitudes. They agreed with most of what was said, often with conflicting ideas and avoided engagement in the controversy. They seem to react to the information presented in class from a Contact status. Here is a typical response from one of these two participants.

> On reflection on the papers, I think we have been guided to think about our own perspective of ethnicity. In addition, we have been given a peek into the lives of other ethnic groups ... I did have a very hard time with the set up of the class. Maybe it is because, as younger students said, as an older teacher I am set in my ways and resistant to change.

Resisting to Change: The second group which I called resisting to change included four participants in their early thirties (one was fifty). They reacted defensively to any information that affirmed the existence of racism in this society. Some signs of change and acceptance were noticed in the older participant towards the end

of the semester, but the other three were mostly responding to the material from a Reintegration and Pseudo-Independence statuses.

To illustrate the defensives, perhaps fear and anxiety among participants of this group let's consider one person's reaction to Cross's notion of African American racial identity development.

> What disturbed me the most about this article is the Internalization stage where the Black person has totally committed to the Black culture, society, and has changed the view of the world and has revitalized personality. I think this is great to totally commit to a culture, but then the article goes on to talk about that person will then segregate to the Black culture and basically eat, live and breath Black culture. This made me upset because it's not preparing these people for the multicultural world which we all live in.

A sense of cultural racism and "blaming the victim" for struggling to maintain their own language and subsequently failing to speak English--the language of hegemony and dominance--to their children is succinctly illustrated in the following exchange between the instructor and one of this groups participants. She writes,

> Some children come to my room to learn to speak English. It is difficult for them because most of them do not speak English at home. I think it is selfish of these parents because when English is not followed up at home, it is more difficult for them. You responded to this statement by stating "maybe the parents do not speak English." My problem with this is that these parents have been in this country for 20 years and have chosen to educate their children here. These parents work and I can almost bet that English is spoken at their job. If they do not know English then maybe they should learn it too. I would not move to France and enroll my daughter in public school without her being able to speak French.

The Searchers: The third group seems to have been the one that gained the most from this experience. This group included three participants in their late twenties-early thirties who constantly reflected on and shared the experience of change they were experiencing during the course. The new information was surprising to them and they took advantage of the supportive atmosphere in the class to share their dilemmas and changing attitudes. I call this group the searchers to illustrate the process of search and change they have experienced through the course and after. In terms of Helms statuses they could be moving from Immersion-Emersion to Autonomy.

Consider the struggle of one member of this group as she shares her emotional and intellectual reactions to the new information she was being presented with. She writes in her reflections:

> Having been a graduate student for one week, I am amazed by the new ways in which ideas are being presented to me and the differences in how I look at things ... just in the past few days since beginning this class, I have begun noticing the change in my ways of thinking.

An excellent illustration of this group which began a process of exploration and change as a result of the course experience is shown in an e-mail message entitled "the enlightenment continues..." which I received few weeks later from one of the participant. She wrote:

> Without a class this second half [of the summer], I've had the time to do a little light reading. Two of the books I've read, though novels, have been informative. A book by Danielle Steele, Silent Honor, talked about the Japanese- American experience during WW2, and Your Blues Ain't Like Mine, by Bebe Moore Campbell, reveals southern racism in the 1950s and later. Kent State is even mentioned in that one. I thank you again for opening my eyes in class this summer.

Identity Achieved: Finally, two participants which I labeled identity achieved were reacting to the information presented in class from an Autonomy status. Both of these women, in their late twenties, have traveled and worked abroad in the Middle East and Africa. Their awareness of the existence of institutionalized and cultural racism and their comfort with their White identity served as a role model for

individuals who were in the midst of the process of reaching Autonomy.

Discussing her views of African American racial identity development and its impact on inter-racial relations, one participant of this group reflects on her reactions to Cross's model.

> As a white woman I am aware of the fact that many African Americans have anti-white sentiment at some point in their life. I think perhaps reading this section in the Cross article made me more aware of the strength and longevity these feeling might have. I realize and appreciate one point Cross made related to this issue. Cross mentioned that with internalization-commitment comes an anger at the institutions of inequity and not necessarily at people in general.

Conclusion and Implications

Probably it is safe to say that teaching as a profession has been dominated by White middle class women. As colleges of education throughout the country are involved in preparing a new generation of teachers to work in a multicultural society, their efforts must take a full measure of the individual teacher as a whole person. Furthermore, social identity in a pluralistic society (i.e. ethnicity, gender, race, class, etc.) is clearly considered as part of the individual's self concept. This case study explored issue of resistance and change when dealing with "racial information" among a group of eleven White women teachers from the vantage point of their own White racial identity. While it is premature to make pedagogical recommendations based on this limited case study, two points have proved very helpful. First, the conceptualization of non-racist White racial identity as a positive development put many of the participants at ease and helped them explore further into their own identity. Second, the use of cooperative learning created a cooperative context in which individuals felt safe to voice and explore their opinions regarding controversial issues.

Bibliography

Aboud, F. & Doyle, A. (1993). The early development of ethnic identity and attitudes. In M. Bernal & G. Knight (Eds.), Ethnic identity: Formation and transmission among Hispanic and other minorities (pp. 47-59). New York: State University of New York Press.

Babad, E., Brinbaum, M. & Benne, K. (1983). The social self: Group influence on personal identity. London: Sage Publications.

Carter, R. (1997). Is white a race? Expressions of white racial identity. In Fine, M., Weis, L., Powel, L. & Wong, M. (Eds.) Off white: Readings on race, power, and society (pp. 198-209).

Cross, W. (1971). The Negro to Black conversion experience. Black World, 20, 13-17.

Cross, W. (1991). Shades of Black: Diversity in African-American identity. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Helms, J. E. (1984). Toward a theoretical explanation of the effects of race on counseling: A Black and White model. The Counseling Psychologist, 12 (4), 153-165.

Helms, J. E. (1995). An update of Helms's White and people of color racial identity models. In J. Ponterotto, J. Casas, L. Suzuki & C. Alexander (Eds.), Handbook of multicultural counseling (pp. 181-198).

Helms, J. E. (1997). Towards a model of While racial identity development. In K. Arnold & C. King (Eds.), College student development and academic life: Psychological, intellectual, social, and moral issues (pp. 207-224). New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.

Johnson, D., Johnson, R. & Holubec, E. (1993). Circles of learning: Cooperation in the classroom. Minnesota: Interaction Book Company.

Jones, J. M. (1981). The concept of racism and its changing reality. In B. P. Bowers & R. G. Hunts (Eds.), Impact of racism on White Americans (pp. 27-49). Beverly Hills, CA.: Sage Publications.

Phinney, J. (1989). Stages of ethnic identity development in minority group adolescents. Journal of Early Adolescence, 9, (1-2), 34-49.

Spindler, G. & Spindler, L. (1990). The American cultural dialogue and its transmission. Bristol, PA: The Flamer Press.

Tajfel, H. (1977). Social psychology and social reality. New Society, 39,65-66.

Tajfel, H. (1981). Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology. Cambridge: Cabridge University Press.